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# What is Test Optional?

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## Test Optional Defined

Test-optional admissions describes the process by which many colleges and universities consider for admissions all or most applicants withoutrequiring an ACT or SAT test score to be submitted.FairTest has been defining, tracking, and promoting such policies since the organization was founded in 1985.

The most common terms associated with these polcies are:

- Test optional:** This is both a blanket term for schools which do not require applicants to submit test scores before admissions decisions are made, including test-free institutions, and a more specific label for the more than 1,700 bachelor-degree granting schools that currently give students the power to choose whether ACT/SAT scores will be considered in the admissions process.
- Test-free:** This refers to institutions that will not consider ACT or SAT results in the admissions process even if scores are submitted. As of September, 2023, about 86 campuses, including the University of California and the California State University, the nation’s largest public higher education system, are test-free.Test-free is sometimes referred to as “test blind”.

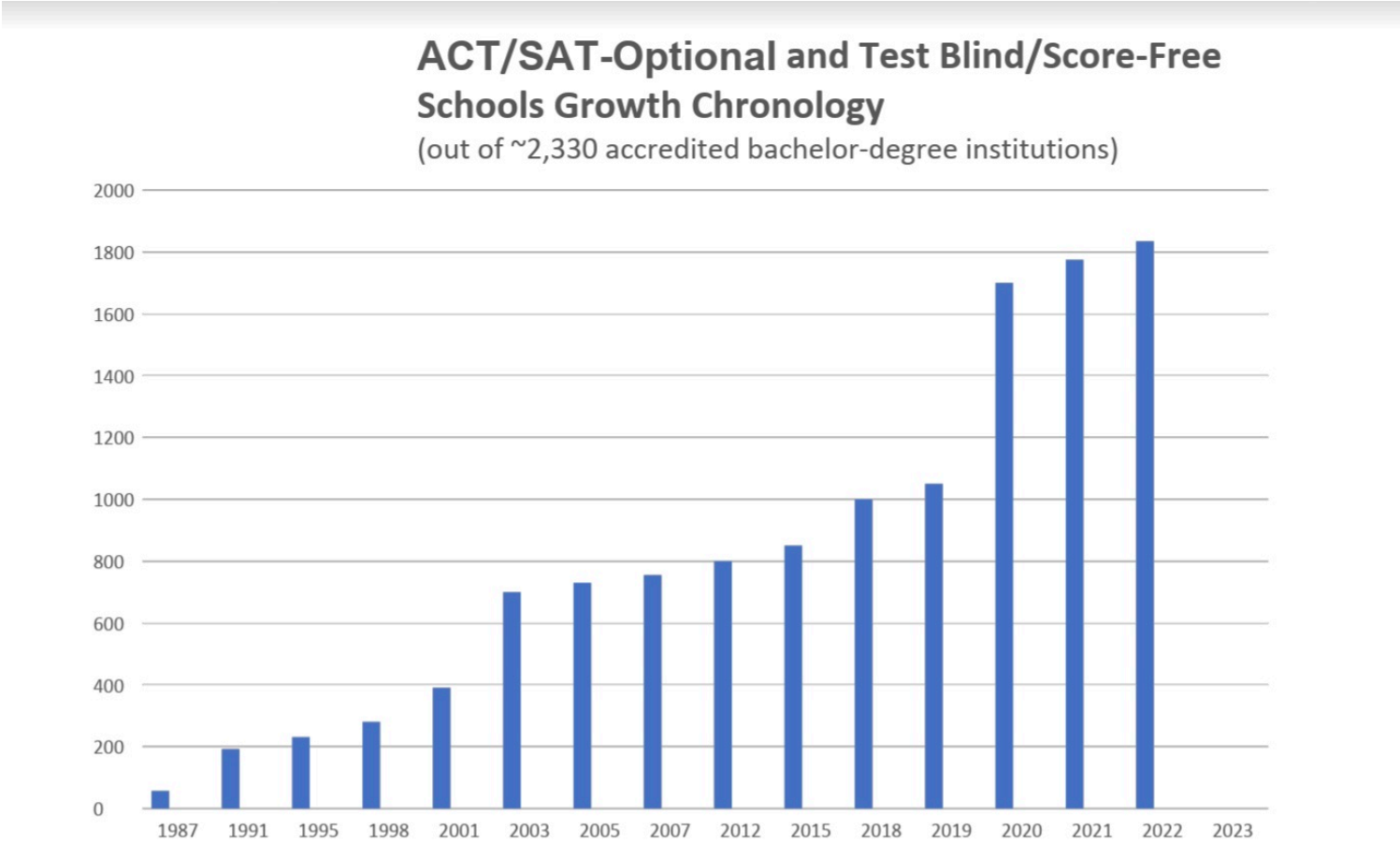
Given that that the U.S. has a large and varied higher educational system, each university with test optional admissions practices might administer these policies slightly differently.

Notes in the “exceptions” column of the FairTest Test Optional List explain variations in these policies. FairTest tries to research and report accurate information, but it is not possible to keep up perfectly with 2,300 different admissions policies. Applicants and their advocates should always refer to individual school’s websites to verify current policies.

[Test Optional Colleges](#)

## A Brief History

Since 1968, colleges and universities have been limiting their use of the SAT and ACT in the admissions process. FairTest’s test optional list provides a constantly updated resource to track the rapidly growing number of U.S. bachelor degree-granting institutions that admit most or all of their students without requiring either the SAT or ACT.



Milestones

- 1969: Bowdoin College announced that applicants would have the choice of whether to submit the tests or not making it the first test optional college.
- 1994: Dickenson College becomes test optional
- 2000: Muhlenberg College is among the **280** colleges that are part of the test optional surge at the end of the 90s.
- 2001: Richard Atkinson, president of the University of California, recommended that colleges stop using the SAT and switch to tests tied more closely to the high school curriculum
- 2005: Bates College is among the **730** test optional colleges and universities.
- 2009: Agnes Scott College College joins the test optional movement bringing the number of test optional colleges to about **800**.
- 2015: [Bennington College](#) becomes test optional.
- 2017: Emerson College and University of the Ozarks announce test optional policies bringing the count to **950** colleges.
- 2019: Prior to the pandemic public colleges in Oregon jointly announce adoption of test optional admission, which brings the total test optional schools to more than **1050**.
- 2021: University of California and Californual State University become test free.



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